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# Animating Japan through Sport Tourism: An International Research Collaboration

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## **Animating Japan through Sport Tourism: An International Research Collaboration**

### **Format:**

We are proposing a 60-minute research panel featuring three speakers who have recently initiated a collaborative sport tourism research program based out of Wakayama University in Japan. The formal presentations will take about 40 minutes with the balance of the session devoted to discussions about sport tourism as a place maker as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with international tourism research collaboration.

### **Theme:**

Sport tourism is actively being used as a place maker in Japan with the country committing to host the 2019 Rugby World Cup, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2021 World Masters Games. At the same time, active sport tourism activities like hiking, surfing and skiing are increasingly being recognized as place makers but to this date, little research has been done on these topics in a Japanese context.

### **Sub themes:**

The proposed studies identified as part of this collaboration intersect with a number of the conference sub-themes including: 1) visitor experience design and measurement, 2) place attachment, and 3) product development. These connections will be highlighted when appropriate in the panel presentation.

### **Panel format:**

Eiji Ito, Wakayama University, Japan will open with an overview of the current status of tourism research in Japan. He will then focus more specifically on the Faculty of Tourism at Wakayama University and its newly established Centre for Tourism Research.

Tom Hinch, University of Alberta, will follow with an overview of the Sport Tourism Research Unit and its three-year research program. He will also report on the findings of a comprehensive review of the literature related to sport tourism in Japan that is currently in progress.

Gordon Walker, University of Alberta will provide the final presentation with a summary of a proposed study of active sport tourism in the Kumano Kodo World Heritage site. This study will adopt social psychological and cultural psychological perspectives to examine visitor experience. He will conclude with an overview of the challenges and opportunities of conducting tourism research in a foreign setting.

### **Appeal to conference delegates:**

The appeal of this session to conference delegates will be two fold. In the first instance, it is about a research program related to the animation of place – the central theme of the conference. In the second instance it is novel in that it

highlights an international research collaboration involving Canadians but has a place focus that falls outside of Canada. This will highlight the opportunities that exist for Canadian researchers to make international contributions.

### **Speaker biographies:**

Tom Hinch, PhD

Tom is a professor with the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta and has committed to visiting Wakayama University annually for the next three years to head up their Sport Tourism Research Unit. He is particularly interested in the relationship between sport, tourism and place.

Eiji Ito, PhD

Eiji is an assistant professor with the Faculty of Tourism at Wakayama University and initiated the Sport Tourism Research Unit. His major research interest focuses on leisure behaviours including sport tourist behaviours, using a cross-cultural and socio-psychological lens.

Gordon Walker, PhD

Gordon is a professor with the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta along with a commitment to visit Wakayama University annually for the next three years to assist with the development of their Sport Tourism Research Unit. His research and teaching focuses on leisure behaviour broadly, and its applicability to travel and tourism specifically, using a cross-cultural, socio-psychological lens.